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LETTER DATED 24 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to bring to your attention the statement by the Presidency of the European Union on the situation in Sierra Leone, issued on 20 February 1998 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and of its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) John WESTON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement issued on 20 February 1998 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the situation in Sierra Leone

The European Union is concerned about the continued instability in Sierra Leone and, in particular, the civilian casualties in Freetown.

Following the recent fighting, the need now is for targeted humanitarian operations to start as soon as possible to relieve the suffering of the people. We urge the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group to cooperate with the United Nations, ECHO and other aid agencies to facilitate this process, to ensure that international humanitarian law is upheld and to assure the security of those engaged in providing such relief.

The European Union further urges all those involved in the conflict in Sierra Leone to respect the lives of European Union citizens and demands the immediate release of all hostages from European Union member States.

The European Union believes that the peaceful future of Sierra Leone can only be assured by a process of reconciliation, as was envisaged under the Abidjan Peace Accord and the Conakry Agreement. We urge all parties to work to this end. The swift return of the democratic Government of President Kabbah is an important first step.